



DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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May 22, 1980

CHINESE CHRISTIANS GREET BRETHREN

Editors: An Episcopal Church couple, who had spent eight years as missionaries in China both before and after World War II, recently paid a visit to that country and were able to meet and reminisce with old Christian friends. The Rev. and Mrs. Leslie L. Fairfield of Shutesbury, Mass., were given a copy of an "Open Letter" from a Christian umbrella group to Chinese Christians. They sent a copy to Presiding Bishop Allin with the comment that: "This may be an historic statement, indicating a new phase in the resurgent life of the Christian Church in China, in which Anglicans are apparently taking a prominent part." Excerpts of the open letter from the "Standing Committee of the Christian Movement for Self-Government, Self-Support and Self-Propagation," the "Three-Self movement," appear below.

"For the first time in over ten years the Standing Committee of our national Three-Self movement met in Shanghai during the last week. As we listened to colleagues' reports on church conditions in different parts of China, we felt specially close to our brothers and sisters in the whole household of God and prayed with special fervency for God's blessing on you.

"In closing our meeting today we are struck by the fact that the meeting has been so similar to the one in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15. We did not have a set agenda. We just let the Holy Spirit guide us as we entered into all subjects of deep concern to us.

"Although in the recent past the policy of religious freedom was trespassed upon by the Lin Piao and the "gang of four" cliques, and although many of our clergy and leaders of Three-Self organizations had to suffer all sorts of persecution alongside leading cadres of religious affairs bureaus and of other governmental organs, as well as many intellectuals, yet it heartens us to learn that large numbers of Christians all over China have persisted in their faith, that their service, prayer and waiting before God had not ceased and that they have witnessed well in places where they work. We have seen that the church has not let her light to be put out but has gone through trials and been strengthened, and that our witness to Christ also has not been dimmed but has in quietude borne fruit.

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"All these years we have firmly believed that the correct line of the Communist Party would return to New China. We have firmly believed that the policy of religious freedom laid down by Chairman Mao and Premier Chou En-Lai was correct and could not be permanently abrogated by anybody. We have firmly believed that the Chinese church, through the Three-Self movement, would become cleansed and fair, an abode for the Lord. We have firmly believed that upheavals would pass and stability would be restored, bringing a bright prospect for New China. And we have firmly believed that we Christians who cherish a love both for our motherland and for our religious faith would surely be able to work alongside the rest of our Chinese people and make our contributions to our motherland.

"Brothers and sisters, today, China has indeed returned to the correct orientation. As we met and listened to all the encouraging reports summarized above, we were greatly moved and inspired by Christian examples. They turned our hearts to thanksgiving. Our faith in the gospel of Christ became strengthened. We are resolved more than ever to unite and do the work entrusted us by God and by the fellow-Christians of the whole country, so that what we have firmly believed can all be turned into facts.

"We need to develop and strengthen further our movement.

"The Three-Self patriotic movement has achieved a great deal in the course of the last thirty years. As a result of this movement more and more Chinese Christians have come to cherish our motherland. There is a heightened sense of national pride on our part as Chinese and we are now much closer to the people of China in our thinking and standing. As a result of this movement Chinese Christianity is no longer a tool exploited by imperialism or by other reactionary forces. It is now basically a religion adhered to by Chinese citizens. Also as a result of this movement more and more of our Chinese people and cadres have changed their attitude towards Christianity. It is no longer a foreign religion encouraging its adherents to be un-patriotic but is a religion governed, supported and nurtured by Chinese Christians ourselves. These are all very important changes from the perspective of Christian witness in China during the long, coming historical period. And we cannot possibly see these changes had there not been the initiation of this movement by the late Mr. Y. T. Wu and other faithful servants of God.

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"Today, we fellow-Christians all over China are rebuilding our Temple with the same zeal as that of the Old Testament prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Zerubabel. We believe that under the guidance of the eternal God our Father the glory of the latter Temple will be greater than of the former. . . ."

"We are aware that in churches abroad there is a small number of people still hostile to New China today. They attack our principled stand on Three-Self and put their hands into our church life in the name of "evangelism" and "research." Regardless of the colour of their skin, they are trying in reality to push Chinese Christianity back to the colonial past and earn for it again the onus of a foreign religion taking its stand against the Chinese people. We hope that these individuals would not receive the support of the other Christians abroad and their leaders. We are sure their pursuits will not bear good fruit in the long run.

"As to those Christians abroad that assume an attitude of equality towards us and respect our principled stand on independence and self-government, we are ready to enter into friendly relations and fellowship with them.

"In order to turn our intentions into facts, we have decided to call a national Christian conference in the near future in which, aside from the discussion of other important questions, we will produce the new national committee of the Three-Self movement and go into the question of the formation of the Christian national organization. These are questions which concern every Christian and we request you to put the conference in your prayers. If you have any opinion regarding our Christian work in China today, please write to us at 169 Yuen Ming Yuen Road, Shanghai, so that we can take it into consideration at an early stage. . . ."

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